

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0045

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 1212

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: CAMPAIGN '75 - FINAL SITREP

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SUMMARY:

THIS IS THE FINAL SITREP ON THE THAI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY JANUARY 26. THE EMBASSY HAS FILED ITS

PREDICTIONS WHICH SUGGEST THAT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE, THAI NATION, SOCIAL AGRARIAN, AND SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTIES (THE REMAKES OF THE FORMER REGIME'S UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY) WILL HAVE ENOUGH VOTES TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. IN THE MEANTIME THE CAMPAIGN ENTERS ITS FINAL DAYS. MOST PARTY HEADQUARTERS EXUDE CONFIDENCE AND BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS PLAY UP LOCAL OPINION POLLS. ALTHOUGH MANY CANDIDATES ARE GOING IN FOR LAST MINUTE SPEDNING, SOME PARTIES FEEL THE FINANCIAL PINCH. LAST MINUTE GIMMICKS SUCH AS SPREADING THE RUMOR THAT CERTAIN LEADING CANDIDATES ARE DEAD CHARACTERIZE THE CAMPAIGN. INTIMIDATION OF MUSLIM VOTERS IN THE SOUTHERN MALAY/MUSLIM PROVINCES HAS SURFACED. THE ARMY IS READY TO VOTE, BUT SOME OF THE HILLTRIBE PEOPLE IN THE NORTH DON'T YET UNDERSTAND HOW TO. WHILE THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR IS PROMISING TO HAVE THE ELECTION RESULTS WITHIN TWO DAYS OF THE VOTING, PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK IS PUTTING THE FINAL TOUCHES ON THE SENATORIAL APPOINTMENTS WHICH THE KING IS SCHEDULED TO ANNOUNCE ELECTION DAY. END SUMMARY.

I. PREDICTIONS

1. WITH APPROPRIATE FANFARE THE EMBASSY PROCLAIMED ITS ELECTION PREDICTIONS (REF B AND C). OTHER PROPHETS AGREE WITH US THAT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY WILL GAIN THE MOST SEATS. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE FOUR PARTIES BUILT AROUND FORMER UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY (UTPP) PARLIAMENTARIANS WILL HAVE THE REQUIRED SEATS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, IF THEY WISH. CENTRIST PARTIES ACCOUNT FOR 25 PERCENT OF THE SEATS IN OUR PREDICTIONS AND THE LEFTISTS HANG ON WITH 7 PERCENT. THESE ESTIMATES RELY HEAVILY ON A CANDIDATE'S PAST PERFORMANCE AND THE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVESTED IN HIS CAMPAIGN. THE THAI PUBLIC HAS ONLY BEEN POLLED ONCE IN THE LAST EIGHTEEN YEARS, HOWEVER, AND SURPRISES CAN HAPPEN.

2. THE DATAMAT COMPANY RELEASED JANUARY 21 THE RESULTS OF ITS POLL OF THE 26 SEATS IN BANGKOK (REF D). THE PARTY TRENDS THAT IT PREDICTS ARE NOT FAR FROM OURS MENTIONED ABOVE, BUT WE AGREE WITH DATAMAT ON ONLY ELEVEN OF THE TWENTY-SIX
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WINNERS. TWO OTHER SURVEYS RELEASED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS ALSO DIFFER. THE STIFFER COMPETITION AND EXPECTED HIGHER VOTER TURNOUT IN BANGKOK OVER THE 1969 ELECTION MAKE ANY ESTIMATES FOR THE CAPITAL TENUOUS AT BEST.

II. CAMPAIGN TACTICS

3. THE CABINET RULED LAST WEEK THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES

COULD PURCHASE 30 MINUTES OF AIR TIME IN ADDITION TO THE THIRTY SECOND SPOT ANNOUNCEMENT GIVEN ALL PARTIES. PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, LEADER OF THE THAI NATION PARTY, AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS, WILL ADDRESS THE NATION IN THE LAST TWO DAYS BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN.

4. MOST PARTY HEADQUARTERS EXUDE CONFIDENCE. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY LEADER THAWIT KLINPRATHUM ANNOUNCED JANUARY 16 THAT HIS PARTY WOULD WIN 105 SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENT. (WE GIVE HIM 54). HE ATTRIBUTED 40 SEATS TO THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, 20 EACH TO SOCIAL ACTION AND SOCIAL AGRARIAN, AND 10 SEATS TO THE SOCIALISTS. BOTH HIS FIGURES AND FAILURE TO MENTION THE THAI NATION PARTY ARE REMARKABLE. A RANKING MEMBER OF THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP), WHO HAS CONSISTENTLY TOLD EMBOFFS THAT SAP HAD AN ASSURED 100 SEATS, QUOTED A FIGURE OF 30 DURING A JANUARY 19 LUNCH. IN A PARTICULARLY SOBER STATEMENT THE DEMOCRAT PARTY CLAIMED THAT IT WOULD TAKE HALF OF BANGKOK'S 26 SEATS, A SHARP COMEDOWN FROM THE DAYS OF THE LONG LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN BANGKOK AND THE DEMOCRATS.

5. THE CHIANG MAI CONSULATE SAID THAT IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE ELECTION THE RACES HAVE TURNED FROM EFFORTS TO BUILD UP ONE'S IMAGE, TO HIGHLY PERSONAL ATTACKS ON OPPONENTS. A NEWCOMER MIGHT GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE HONEST CANDIDATE RUNNING IN THE NORTH, AND HE MAY NOT BE DEAD WRONG. THE AIR IS FULL OF HIGHLY PERSONAL ATTACKS, USUALLY CHARGING DISLOYALTY (FOR SWITCHING PARTIES), LACK OF TRUST-WORTHINESS (FOR PAST ASSOCIATION WITH THE OUSTED FORMER REGIME), OR GENERAL DISHONESTY.

6. A RECENT TWIST IN THE CAMPAIGN HAS ATTEMPTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FEW HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ASSASSINATIONS. POPULAR CANDIDATES FIND THAT THE CAMPETITION IS SPREADING CONFIDENTIAL

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THE RUMOR THAT THEY ARE DEAD. THE DEAD-BY-RUMOR CANDIDATES HAVE TO EXPEND THEIR RESOURCES IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE CAMPAIGN TRAVELLING AROUND LETTING THE ELECTORATE SEE THAT THEY REMAIN AMONG THE LIVING. SOME SOCIALIST PARTY CANDIDATES HAVE SUFFERED DEATH-BY-RUMOR IN THE NORTHEAST. CHIANG MAI CANDIDATES SOMBUN SURINTA (SOCIAL NATIONALIST) AND KRAISON THANTIPHON (DEMOCRAT) HAVE SUFFERED THIS FATE. OTHERWISE KRAISON IS EXPECTED TO WIN HIS CONTEST.

7. ALSO IN THE AREA OF LAST MINUTE APPARENT DIRTY TRICKS, THE TRISHAW DRIVERS' ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAS REMOVED PRESIDENT PRATHIP SIANGWAN FOR ALLEGED CORRUPTION INVOLVING GIFTS OF RICE TO THE DEVASTATED SOUTH. PRATHIP IS A SAP CANDIDATE IN BANGKOK, RUNNING IN DISTRICT SIX AGAINST DEMOCRAT PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT. THERE MAY BE

NO LOVE LOST, BECAUSE THE DEMOCRATS HAVE CRIED FOUL OVER
SAP POSTERS IN DISTRICT SIX SHOWING SENI'S PICTURE ALONG
WITH THE TWO SAP CANDIDATES.

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

III. CAMPAIGN FINANCES

8. AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN HAS MENTIONED TO US THAT THE
JAPANESE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE MOUNT-
ING REQUESTS FROM POLITICAL PARTIES FOR MONEY. THE JAPANESE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HELD A SPECIAL MEETING RECENTLY DURING
WHICH IT DECIDED THAT ITS MEMBERS SHOULD MAKE NO FURTHER
CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANY THAI POLITICAL PARTY.

9. WHETHER FROM NAIVETE OR BOLDNESS, VARIOUS PEOPLE, REPRESENTING EITHER THEMSELVES OR A POLITICAL PARTY, HAVE APPROACHED THE EMBASSY ASKING FOR MONEY. WE HAVE TURNED CONFIDENTIAL

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DOWN EACH REQUEST. THE THAI NATIONAL REGENERATION PARTY LEADERSHIP TOOK AN EMBOFF OUT TO LUNCH MONTHS AGO, APPARENTLY TO PROCURE HIS CALLING CARD. SUBSEQUENTLY ONE OF THE PARTY CANDIDATES IN KORAT PROVINCE USED IT TO PROVE HIS CLOSE CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS. THIS WAS THE SAME CANDIDATE WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S SUPPORT FOR A PROJECT WHICH WILL USE THE MEKHONG RIVER TO IRRIGATE THE DRY NORTHEAST.

10. AS THE CAMPAIGN ENTERS ITS FINAL DAYS, CANDIDATES WITH MONEY ARE OPENING THE STOPS WHILE THE POORER CANDIDATES ARE FRANTICALLY MAKING THEIR LAST "POOR BUT HONEST" SPEECHES. THE CHIANG MAI CONSULATE REPORTS THAT NEW BANNERS AND POSTERS ARE SPROUTING THROUGHOUT THE NORTH.

11. JUST WHEN MONEY MAY MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, SOME PARTIES FIND THEMSELVES RUNNING OUT. A RANKING MEMBER OF SAP TOLD US JANUARY 16 THAT PARTY FINANCES WERE LIMITED. SHORTLY AFTER THAT NEWSPAPERS CARRIED ARTICLES THAT SAP CANDIDATES HAD COME TO BANGKOK FOR MORE MONEY AND FOUND THE CUPBOARD BARE. APPARENTLY SAP IS ROUTING ITS FUNDS INTO THE FEW FACES WHICH IT BELIEVES IT MAY WIN. OTHERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT SAP IS DELIBERATELY CREATING A POOR BOY IMAGE TO INCREASE VOTER APPEAL.

IV. THE ARMY'S ROLE

12. IN A JANUARY 20 CONVERSATION WITH THE DCM, POWER-BORKER GENERAL KRIT SIWARA SAID THAT THE FOUR REMAKES OF THE UTPP WOULD WIN ENOUGH SEATS TO FORM THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THAI NATION WOULD JOIN WITH EITHER SOCIAL AGRARIAN OR SOCIAL NATIONALIST TO DO SO. HE SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT FORMED AFTER THE JANUARY 26 ELECTIONS WOULD ONLY LAST SIX MONTHS.

13. KRIT TRAVELED TO KHORAT PROVINCE WITHIN THE LAST WEEK, BUT WHETHER HE GAVE A PUBLIC BOOST TO CANDIDATES CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN (THAI NATION) IS UNCLEAR. KRIT PRAISED CHATCHAI TO THE DCM PRIVATELY. THE CHIANG MAI CONSULATE REPORTS THAT RTA UNITS IN LAMPANG HAVE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF EACH UNIT IS TO LEAD HIS MEN TO VOTE ON JANUARY 26. THERE ARE OTHER REPORTS THAT THE ARMY HAS RECEIVED VOTING INSTRUCTIONS. TO QUIET CIVILIAN FEARS, HOWEVER, THERE WILL APPARENTLY BE NO POLLING STATIONS ON MILITARY POSTS.

14. DURING OUR JANUARY 17 VISIT TO CHONBURI PROVINCE, THEPARIT KRAIRONARIT, SAP SECRETARY GENERAL BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE SUDDEN TRANSFER OF TROOPS FROM CHONBURI MILITARY DISTRICT WHERE BUNCHU IS RUNNING AGAINST THAI NATION DEPUTY LEADER SIRI SIRIYOTHIN. SAP FEARS THAT SINCE THESE TROOPS ARE ON THE VOTERS' ROLLS IN CHONBURI, THEIR TRANSFER ALLOWS THE POSSIBILITY OF A MASS MILITARY VOTE FOR SIRI.

V. SOUTHERN VENDETTAS

15. THE CONSUL IN SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT LEAFLETS HAVE APPEARED IN BOTH THAI AND YAWI (THE MALAY DIALECT) IN THE MALAY/MUSLIM PROVINCES OF YALA, PATTANI AND NARATHIWAT. THE LEAFLETS THREATEN DEATH FOR ANY MUSLIMS WHO VOTE FOR THAI BUDDHIST CANDIDATES. MUSLIMS MAKE UP ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF THE THREE PROVINCES. ACCORDING TO SONGKHLA, THE ELECTION IN NARATHIWAT WAS DIFFICULT TO CALL ANYWAY, SINCE RURAL VOTES WERE CRUCIAL AND THE COUNTRYSIDE WAS AT THE MERCY OF MANY BANDIT GROUPS. ONE OF NARATHIWAT'S PREVIOUS PARLIAMENTARIANS, THAWON CHAISUWAN (SOCIAL JUSTICE), IS BUDDHIST. THE OTHER THREE LEADING CANDIDATES (THAI NATION, DEMOCRAT, NEW FORCE) ARE MUSLIM. THAI NATION CANDIDATE KAMTHON LACHAROT IS THE ONLY BUDDHIST AMONG THE LEADING CANDIDATES IN PATTANI. PRASAT CHAITHO (SOCIAL JUSTICE), WHO LOST THE 1969 ELECTION BY EIGHT VOTES, IS A BUDDHIST RUNNING IN YALA. SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT THE LEAFLETS APPARENTLY HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT ON THE ELECTORATE. IF THE BUDDHIST CANDIDATES DON'T WIN, HOWEVER, THE RELATIVE STANDING AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES WILL NOT CHANGE MUCH.

VI. HILLTRIBES VOTING PROBLEMS

16. THE CHIANG MAI CONSULATE REPORTS THAT THOSE HILLTRIBESMEN
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WHO ARE REGISTERED ARE NOT EXPECTED TO HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE AT THE POLLS. EVEN IN MAE HONG SON WHERE THE KAREN ARE VASTLY IN THE MAJORITY, THE DISTRICT OFFICER TOLD A CONSULAR OFFICER THAT HIS ATTEMPTS TO INSTRUCT THE HILL-TRIBES IN THE VOTING PROCEDURES HAD MET WITH LITTLE

SUCCESS. AFTER CAREFUL EXPLANATION TO SEVERAL VILLAGES, ONLY ONE MEO GOT HIS CHECK MARK ON THE CORRECT SIDE OF THE BALLOT. JOURNALIST SUMALI WIRAWAIT WROTE A HIGHLY CRITICAL ARTICLE IN THE "BANGKOK POST" JANUARY 19 FAULTING THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR FOR THE BALLOT FORMAT. THE HILLTRIBE BALLOT PROBLEMS, AND STORIES WE HAVE HEARD IN OUR TRAVELS THAT THE THAI RURAL POPULATION WILL HAVE SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES WITH THE BALLOT, TEND TO CONFIRM SOME OF SUMALI'S INDIGNATION.

VII. THE LAST LAME-DUCK DAYS

17. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WILL ATTEMPT TO HAVE THE COMPLETE ELECTION RESULTS WITHIN 48 HOURS OF THE VOTING, ACCORDING TO PRESS RELEASES. THIS IS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND EFFICIENCY WITH WHICH MOI UNDER MINISTER LUANG ATTHASIT SITTHISUNTHON HAS APPROACHED ITS ELECTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

18. PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK HAS SOLICITED NOMINATIONS FOR THE NEW SENATE FROM HIS CABINET. NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT HE WILL SHORTLY FORWARD THE LIST TO THE KING NOW RESIDENT IN THE CHIANG MAI PHUPING PALACE. THE 1974 CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE KING ANNOUNCE THE SENATORIAL APPOINTMENTS ON ELECTION DAY.
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